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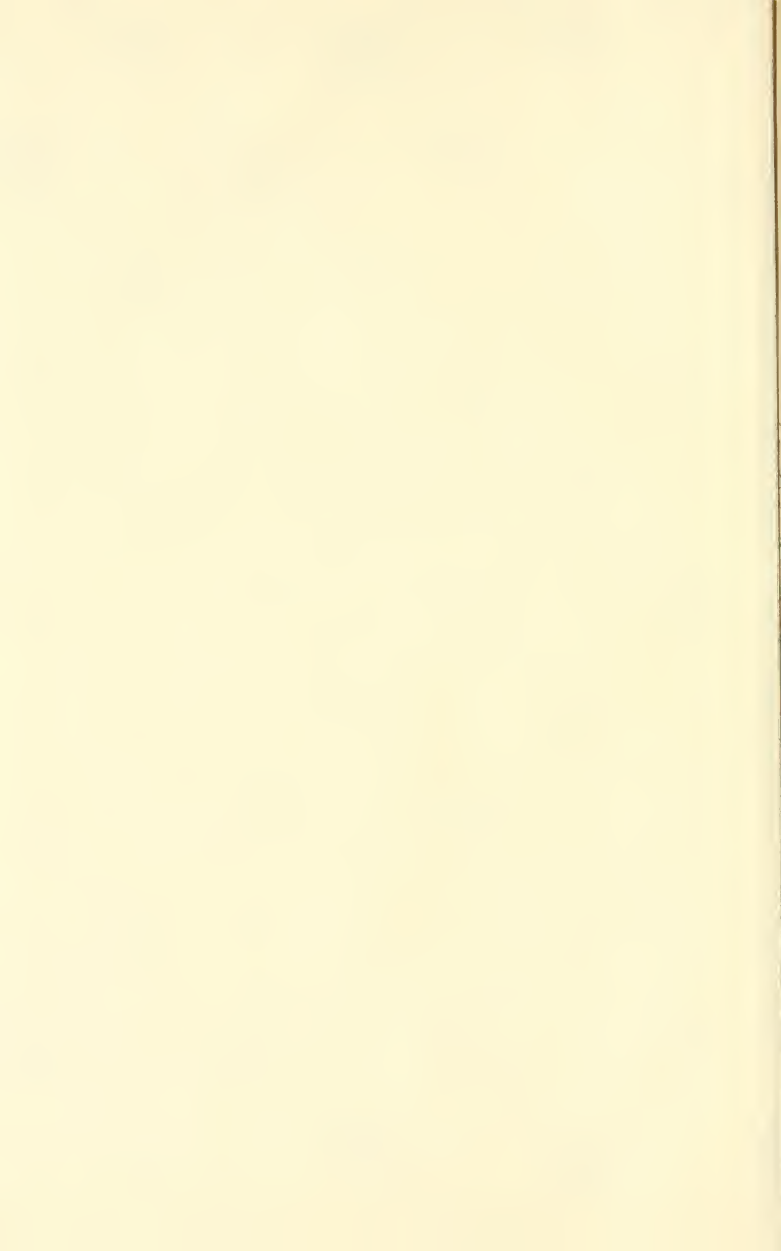


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A

EULOGY

ON

DANIEL WEBSTER,

DELIVERED BY REQUEST

OF THE CITY GOVERNMENT AND CITIZENS OF PORTLAND,

Wednesday, Nov. 17, 1852:



BY LEONARD WOODS, JR., D. D.,

PRESIDENT OF BOWDOIN COLLEGE.

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BRUNSWICK:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY J. GRIFFIN.

1852.

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CITY OF PORTLAND :

MAYOR'S OFFICE, Nov. 19th, 1852.

SIR,—It affords me great pleasure to transmit a copy of a Resolution unanimously passed by our City Council on the 18th inst., requesting a copy for publication of your very interesting and able Address on the character of Mr. WEBSTER, delivered in this City on the 17th inst., in which request I most cordially unite.

With entire respect,

ALBION K. PARRIS.

REV. LEONARD WOODS, D. D.

President of Bowdoin College.

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN, Nov. 18, 1852.

RESOLVED,—That the thanks of the City Government be presented to DR. LEONARD WOODS, for his very able and beautiful analysis of the public, private, moral and intellectual character of the lamented DANIEL WEBSTER; and that he be requested to furnish a copy of the same for publication.

RESOLVED,—That the Mayor be requested to transmit a copy of these resolutions to DR. WOODS.

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN, Nov. 18, 1852.

Read and passed in concurrence by unanimous vote.

Attest: WM. BOYD, City Clerk.

City of Portland, Nov. 18, 1852.

At a meeting of the WEBSTER COMMITTEE the following resolution was offered by John A. Poor, Esq. and unanimously adopted.

RESOLVED,—That the thanks of the Committee be tendered to the Rev. DR. WOODS for the very learned, eloquent and appropriate Eulogy by him pronounced upon the HON. DANIEL WEBSTER at the request of the City authorities and Citizens of Portland, on the 17th inst., and that a copy thereof be requested for publication.

Attest: C. D. BEARCE, Secretary.

JAMES FURBISH, *Chairman.*

TO HON. ALBION K. PARRIS, *Mayor*, and

JAMES FURBISH, Esq., *Chairman.*

As my Eulogy on DANIEL WEBSTER was delivered by appointment of the City Government and a Committee of the Citizens, I do not feel at liberty to decline their request to have it published. It is accordingly herewith submitted to their disposal.

With many thanks for the kind terms in which their request is expressed and communicated,

I remain, gentlemen, with high respect, yours etc.

LEONARD WOODS.

Brunswick, Nov. 20, 1852.

WE have assembled together to take our part in giving expression to a great national sorrow. In the extent to which it has prevailed, and in the depth to which it has penetrated, there has been now, for a long time, no sorrow like to this. The feelings which have turned our steps aside from the paths of business, and brought them hither, in mournful procession, to the House of God, are not confined to our own breasts, but are shared by millions of our countrymen. The solemn scene which here presents itself to our view, is only one of a thousand witnessed in every part of the country. The whole Republic has clothed itself in sackcloth, and abandoned itself to grief. The whole tone of the public mind, usually so cheerful and jubilant, is suddenly depressed to the lowest mood and measure of sadness. A subdued and

thoughtful air reigns in the busy streets, a solemn stillness broods over the home and the fireside, the tear starts unbidden in eyes unused to weep. Turn which way we may, mournful symbols, in gloomy profusion, announce mutely, but with affecting significance, the presence of a sorrow, deep as the fountains of the heart, and co-extensive with the utmost boundaries of the nation.

It is not that we have been visited with any great material calamity. The flock has not been cut off from the fold, nor the herd from the stall. The staff of bread has not failed. The land has not been desolated by pestilence or war. These harsher judgments of Heaven, affecting simply our material interests, may awaken the sorrow of selfish regret, but could never produce a sorrow of so refined and generous a quality, as that which now oppresses the heart, and darkens the face, of the whole people.

When a few weeks since, the tidings, DANIEL WEBSTER IS NO MORE, were inscribed, as it were, on a scroll in the Heavens, and displayed at once over the whole continent, the first emotions which broke forth were those of natural sympathy. There was much in the dignified composure of the

dying scene of the great Statesman, in its Christian resignation, in its domestic tenderness, in its entire fitness for a close to the grand epic of his life, which was adapted to move the deepest sensibilities of that vast cloud of witnesses by whom it was, as it were, surrounded and beheld. And while the nearer circle of kindred and friends, of neighbors and domestics, stood weeping around the Dead, the whole nation lifted up its voice, and wept with those that wept.

But hardly had this first gush of natural sympathy subsided, before the people began to recall, each one for himself, the great qualities and great services of the Deceased ; to reflect on the vast circle of interests upon which his agency had been so beneficially exerted, and on the dangerous crises through which they had passed safely by his interposition ; to consider how he had identified himself with all the great institutions and interests of his country ; in short, to revolve the whole story of his remarkable career, from its humble beginnings at the outermost verge of civilization, till it reached the proudest eminence in the civilized world : and as they did this, there began to prevail a sense of almost personal bereavement, a feeling of the incalculable magnitude of the loss sustained by the

nation in the death of this great man. And as they had wept before in generous sympathy with others, they began now to weep for themselves and for their children,—sorrowing most of all that they should see his face no more.

Mingled with these feelings, there has also appeared some reverent recognition of the high sovereignty of HM, who thus, by a single blow, has laid prostrate the pride and hope of the nation; and some penitent acknowledgment of his awful justice in this visitation. The God of our Fathers, so often forgotten in the day of prosperity, has been remembered in this hour of adversity.

And in the train of these impressions, there has also sprung up some juster and deeper sense of the instability of earthly fortune, of the vanity of human greatness and glory, of the worthlessness of the objects after which, as a nation, we have been running so madly. When in an instance so signal it has been seen, that man in his best estate is altogether vanity, and that all the glory of man is as the flower of the grass, the exclamation has been extorted from a thousand lips,

“What shadows we are, what shadows we pursue!”

The nation would thus seem to have been brought by this great judgment to a solemn pause,

and to have had stirred within its breast, in which the fires of discord and the lusts of power and aggrandizement were so recently raging, some kindlier feelings, some better thoughts, some loftier and purer and holier purposes; to have been waked up for a season to a higher consciousness of its duty and its destiny.

Let us trust that this season will not prove to have been only a lucid interval in a career of madness. Let us trust that these salutary impressions will not fade away from our minds, when these pageants of mourning shall have vanished from our sight; but that they will long continue to exert upon us a restraining, a refining, and an ennobling influence; and that thus this dispensation of Providence, now invested with the dread aspect of a divine judgment, being laid to heart and wisely improved, will become a richer blessing than if our corn and our wine were increased, than if our armies were crowned with new victories, or new territories were added to our domain.

In his Address on the completion of the Bunker Hill Monument, Mr. Webster paused, and pointing to the column which rose before him, exclaimed, "It is not from my lips that that strain

of eloquence is this day to flow, most competent to move and excite the vast multitudes around me: the powerful speaker stands motionless before us!" With how much more reason may it be felt by those appointed to pronounce his Eulogy, that it is not from their lips, but from his, that the eloquence of the occasion is to proceed; and that the best thing they can do, is to point to him, and let him speak for himself. Let us then place ourselves under the spell of that great Presence, which has been so familiar to us in days gone by, and which now, once more, stands invisibly before us! During this hour sacred to his memory, let us pass in review before our minds the several attributes of that complex greatness, 'where every god did seem to set his seal.' And let us contemplate these attributes neither with an overweening admiration on the one hand, nor with a captious criticism and grudging approval, on the other. If in selecting our public servants for offices of high trust, we justly impose on ourselves the cold maxim of *Principles and not men*, let us relax something of the rigor of this rule in judging of them when their stewardship is over; and then at least, if at no other time, give some place to that loyalty of the heart, which passing beyond their principles,

attaches itself to whatever was lofty in their personal character, noble and generous in their words and deeds.

In surveying the elements of Mr. Webster's greatness, our attention is first arrested by his extraordinary *intellectual power*. This undoubtedly constituted his chief distinction. Wherever he was known, it was principally as a commanding intelligence. It was in this sovereign power of mind, throned in that majestic forehead, beaming in those cavernous and unfathomable eyes, and stamping the impress of thought upon his whole countenance, that his strength lay. Every one who came into any connection with him, in the most casual intercourse of life, in the freest intimacy of friendship, felt the controlling power of his mind. It was this which secured to him an easy superiority in that path of life which he had marked out for himself, and which would probably have given him as easy a superiority in almost any other which he might have chosen. It was this which gained him an easy victory over every opponent with whom he ever measured his strength. It was this which gave him his lordly mastery over every subject to which he ever turned his attention. It was this which imparted

to his words their oracular power, to his style its crystal clearness, to his whole discourse its lucid order. It was this which gave to his common sense its practical wisdom, to his graver judgments their infallible authority; and impressed on all his opinions in politics and religion, a certain measured justness and grand simplicity, in harmony with the substantial verities and great realities of existence. It was this, in fine, which transfusing itself through the thousand minor particulars of his public and private life, gave them an elevated and even majestic tone, and produced the collective impression of greatness.

In vindicating for Mr. Webster this transcendent intellectual power, it is not necessary to deny, that in particular mental attributes, he may have been deficient, either by nature or by practice, in comparison with some others. It may readily be conceded that he displayed less high intuitive perception of truth than Plato, less profound philosophical insight than Coleridge, less imaginative vividness and richness of conception than Burke, less metaphysical acumen than Edwards; and at the same time it may be claimed for him, that in native original strength of mind, in what may be called *naked intellect*, he was equal to any of them.

From some latent bias, perhaps, or from outward circumstances, this original intellectual force took in him a practical rather than a speculative direction, moved in the argumentative rather than in the intuitive process, the logical rather than the metaphysical method. But it by no means follows, that had the causes by which this direction of his mind was determined, been different, he might not have succeeded equally in different and opposite departments. It may generally be presumed of minds of that higher order to which his certainly belonged, that they are competent to take the lead in any of the great departments of human thought and action, even in those most opposite to the departments in which they have earned their chief distinction. It has certainly been often seen in the histories of truly great men, that they have passed, back and forth, from the speculative to the practical sphere, from the cloister to the camp and the court, from the deepest seclusion of religious or philosophical meditation, to the highest post of military command or of political administration, and found themselves equally at home in each, and foremost in all. In the lives of Cardinal Ximenes and of Chancellor Bacon, we have examples of men, who having

distinguished themselves in the holiest exercises of religion, or in the profoundest investigations of science and philosophy, acquired afterwards, when opportunity offered, a new distinction in the department of administrative statesmanship. With these examples in view, why may it not be believed, that our great Statesman, had his lot in life been different, or had he been permitted to enjoy at last his long coveted leisure, and to execute his cherished purposes, might have placed himself side by side with the great masters of speculative philosophy, or of divine wisdom!

But whatever may be thought of this suggestion, it may be affirmed, I think, without extravagance, and judging from physical as well as other indications, that he was originally endowed with as much pure intellect as any man of the age; even if we may not venture to say of him, as was said of King Solomon, that there was none like him before him, nor after him shall any arise like unto him, in that wise and understanding heart which the Lord had given him.

And we have come together to-day in a willing allegiance to this royalty of spirit. On other days we pay a sordid homage to wealth, to station, to worldly greatness. We would now render a

more reasonable service to Mind. This is that in which man is most nearly resembled to the Infinite Intelligence, and which, in proportion to the degree in which it is possessed, if not perverted and abused, lays the foundation for all the true and legitimate distinctions among men. It is the mind which makes the man, not the accidents of birth, or fortune, or station. The man of great mind is the true nobleman; the man of the greatest mind is King among men. This crown of intellectual supremacy we would gladly award to him, from whom we have withholden the high magistracy recently in our gift. It was justly, as well as beautifully remarked of him by the successful candidate for that high magistracy, that "his greatness is of that rare character which no earthly position could exalt." In this his appropriate intellectual greatness we prefer to contemplate him. From the dead level of intellectual mediocrity spreading far around, we rejoice that we may look up to one Alpine summit, proudly rearing itself above the plain, and piercing the very skies. We feel it to be a matter of just pride, that in our age and among ourselves, a mind has appeared endowed with gifts so rare and so resplendent. Let others boast of their great men as they may, we shall

always be able to point to Daniel Webster, and say, a greater is here.

But Mr. Webster is entitled to admiration as well for his *great learning*, as for his great mind.— He was certainly no mere scholar, and yet he was a man of great and various acquisitions. Beginning at the very bottom, he climbed to the very top of the Hill of Science. No youthful student ever had less to help and cheer him on his way, than the young farmer-boy of Salisbury, when he walked his two or three miles every day in the winter, to get what learning he could from an itinerant school-master. But he had in him, from this early period, an unquenchable thirst for knowledge, and something of that spirit of literary heroism, so quaintly expressed by Cowley :

Alps rise o'er Alps ; but I will conquer all,
And march the Muses' Hannibal.

The day for cheap literature and the diffusion of knowledge, had not yet come. Few books found their way into those outskirts of society where his lot was cast ; but those few were standard works in prose and poetry ; such as we may remember to have seen in the book-case of the New England farm-house many years ago, now alas ! supplanted

by works of quite another sort. They were books worth reading; and in the intervals of labor on the farm, and especially during the long winter evenings, they were, we may be sure, well read by young Webster, and conned over and over, and in good part committed to memory. As his mind was not pre-occupied with trifles, and had its appetite sharpened by restraint, it fed and grew apace upon this spare and wholesome diet, and made more life-blood out of a single volume, than others from a library. In this early training, the fire-side stories of the hardships and dangers of the border-life, in those troublous times of Indian, French, and English wars, had their full share; and the stern features of the surrounding scenery, and the varying aspect and moods of the adjacent mountain, forest and river, were not without their influence.

From this elementary education of the school and the household, he passed to the Academy and College. As the privileges which these afforded were to be paid for out of his father's hard earnings, and his own labor in school-keeping, they were not misimproved. Even at this early period he made the impression of superiority, and excited the expectation that he would one day be a great man. He was seen to be intent already on some great

object, and to be bending all his powers to the attainment of it. At the close of this second period of his training, he arrived at the threshold of manhood, with his mind already well stored and disciplined, and with a good foundation laid to build upon.

He now entered at once upon his professional training as a Lawyer, and devoted himself with all his mind and heart to the study of the Common Law,—still paying his own way by school-keeping, and copying deeds in the Register's office at Fryeburg. In this study, the character of his mind was already indicated, by his never resting in cases and precedents, but always ascending to the sources of the Law, and grasping its principles. From the study of the Common Law he advanced successively, according to the gradation of the Courts in which he practised, to the study of all the higher branches of Jurisprudence. And so, by sure steps and by his own efforts, long before he had reached the meridian of his life, he had come to stand, in respect to thorough and various legal learning, at the very head of the American Bar, and was widely known through the country as the great Lawyer, before he was known in any other character.

After reaching this eminence he was led, both by his own tastes and by the call of public duty, from a professional to a political career. In order to qualify himself in the best manner for this career, he entered upon a wholly new class of studies, comprising the science of government, Political Philosophy and Economy, the history of nations, ancient and modern, and especially the history of his own country. And so successfully and to such an extent did he pursue these, that in respect to all the learning of the Statesman, he was acknowledged to be without a rival. In whatever other respects he may have been well matched by his great competitors in public life, in the various branches of learning necessary to this high calling, he was accomplished beyond them all. He accordingly took, in this fourth period, the same pre-eminent rank as a Statesman, which he had before held as a Lawyer; or rather, as these vocations were thenceforward exercised by him contemporaneously quite to the end of his life, he stood foremost, at the same moment, in the Court-room and in the Senate-chamber; and thus, in the strong language of Mr. Choate, "won for himself the double fame, and wore the double wreath of Murray and of Chatham, of Wm. Pinkney and Rufus King, in one blended and transcendent superiority."

Nor did Mr. Webster, amid these severer studies, neglect the claims or disdain the charms of general Literature. The extent and accuracy of his general knowledge, especially in the departments of science and of classical learning, has been sometimes called in question. And it is undoubtedly true, that the range of his general knowledge may have been limited in comparison with that of some French Encyclopedist, and that his knowledge of Greek and Latin may have been inaccurate in comparison with that of some German philologist. But it must still be acknowledged, that for one oppressed with the double cares of a Lawyer and a Statesman, his studies were highly liberal and thorough. He appears to have kept tolerably well up with the progress of modern science, interesting himself especially in those branches of it which related to his agricultural pursuits and his manly sports, and in those which tended to enlarge the conceptions of his mind of the wisdom and glory of the Creator. He is reported to have been employed, during some of his last days, in reading the volumes of Humboldt's *Cosmos*.—He appears also to have maintained, through his whole life, an intimate and discriminating acquaintance with the best Greek and Latin writers. And in his recent Address be-

fore the New York Historical Society, to say nothing of his other speeches, he has certainly exhibited a knowledge of the ancient classics, which is neither mean in quality, nor in quantity inconsiderable.—To those at all acquainted with his writings it hardly need be said, that he was quite at home in our standard English literature, and had a singular appreciation no less of its finer beauties of style and sentiment, than of its more sterling merits. On the whole, we shall look in vain for any among our public men, (if we except a few, a very few,—here and there an Everett or a Legare,) who give evidence of an equal richness and fineness of literary culture.

There is no character to which Mr. Webster ever made less pretension, than to that of a man of Letters. Literature was not to him a profession or a trade, but a recreation and a passion. It was an affair of the heart. And it well repaid his affection. It drew a vein of beauty through the rough texture of his colossal greatness. It twined its graceful garlands around the pillar of his strength. It served him many a good turn in his public debates, as in the affair of Banquo's ghost in his Reply to Mr. Hayne. It occupied agreeably many a lonely hour, and gently smoothed many a rough

passage in his journey of life. And it came to him at last in his dying hour, and relieved his mortal agony, by recalling to him a sweet strain of Gray's *Elegy*, from the fading memories of his boyish days.

But the greatness of Mr. Webster was owing hardly more to his great mind and his great learning, than to *the noble traits of his personal character*,—those qualities of the heart, which, so far as they were known, have caused him to be loved, as much as admired.

In his public life and before the world at large, his bearing was cold and reserved, his presence 'lofty and sour'. And those who saw him only thus, were apt to conclude that he was, in common phrase, *all head and no heart*,—that he was a very great man, but very unloveable. But in so judging, they greatly misjudged him. In truth, the emotional part of his nature appears to have been as richly endowed and fully developed, as the intellectual. He was a large-hearted, genial man; full of simple tastes and instincts, gentle and refined sensibilities, and warm natural affections; liberal almost to prodigality; frank in showing both his likes and his dislikes, and scorning every hypocriti-

cal pretension ; incapable of any thing mean ; unwilling to do or say anything, on his own part, to give unnecessary offence to any human being, and always ready to forgive his enemies and slanderers.—He had faults, no doubt ; but they were the faults of a generous, not a niggardly nature. They were not the faults of avarice, or cowardice, or treachery, or hypocrisy, or vindictiveness ; but rather faults of that class which spring from the excess of good qualities, and are sometimes said to lean to virtue's side. But whatever they were, they never brought over his conscience to their side, or bribed his judgment into approbation. His moral sense, unclouded and unperverted, pointed to the right so steadfastly, and bore witness to it so clearly, that he found it impossible, without betraying some embarrassment, even to argue professionally for a cause which he knew to be bad.

Not the least interesting of the traits of Mr. Webster's personal character were his tastes for country-life, and its pleasant alternations of homely toil, of manly sport, and of solitary meditation. In these natural tastes he resembled the English, rather than the American statesman. He once spoke of Mr. Calhoun with some wonder, as having no recreations, and seeming to feel no need of

reliefs from business and retirement from the world. To himself, on the contrary, some seasons of reprieve from public duty, some opportunities to escape from artificial to natural life, were both a necessity and a delight. And as the hero of the classical mythology, after his combats with savage beasts and men, was wont to retire at intervals from his labors, and to bury himself deep in some Caucasian solitude, that he might purge himself from the soil of earthly contact, and regain the consciousness of his divine original; even so did our great Statesman break away, as often as he could, from the din and smoke, the dust and turmoil of public life, and betake himself to his farm, and even thence plunge into the deeper solitude of the silent forest and the resounding shore, that he might restore his broken fellowship with himself, and recover the consciousness of his higher nature. These moments were indeed few and far between; and few are the revelations made to us of the musings of these solitary hours! But they go far to mark the man. They invest his character with a certain poetical interest; they take him at once out of the vulgar ranks; they distinguish him forever from our burly heroes of the stump and the platform; and show him to have possessed a higher

and finer nature, which might act upon, but could not mix with the coarser mould. They place him by the side of such men as Burke, who while they move in the common world, and act with common men, and with all the coarse machinery employed by them, have yet a world of their own apart from this, and far more congenial to them;—men who in some sort live above the world while they live in it, and keep their souls in some relationship with a diviner sphere.—For myself, I must acknowledge that I am deeply impressed with this side of Mr. Webster's many-sided character, and regard him as almost equally admirable in this his contemplative repose, as in his proudest field of action.

In passing on from these tastes of Mr. Webster to a higher order of affections, it will perhaps be thought, that he had less of that broad philanthropy which embraces the whole world of mankind, than is required by the highest law of Christian charity. He took little part in the great philanthropic movements of the age, and showed little sympathy with them. But it may be said on the other hand, by way of compensation, that what his affections wanted in expansiveness, they made up in intensity in the narrower sphere in which they moved. If he loved the world less, he loved his

kindred and country more. If he had less of that fashionable and sentimental benevolence, which travels far out of its way to find objects upon which to expend its sympathies, he had more of that genuine, old fashioned humanity, which provides for one's own household, and relieves the sufferer at one's door. If he was no cosmopolitan, he was in a very remarkable degree susceptible of all the attachments of locality, the ties of consanguinity, and the sentiments of nationality. Where indeed shall we look to find a man in whom all the domestic, the social, the patriotic affections were more healthful and abundant!

With what yearning love did he cling, till his very last days, to the home of his birth and the humble scenes of his childhood! and how eagerly did he bend his steps thitherward, each returning year, that he might revisit once more the old elm which his father had planted, the old well which he had dug, the old cellar, half filled with rubbish, where the log cabin had stood which he had built in the wilderness! And with what mingled feelings of fondness and pride did he regard his noble father, weeping at the thought of the sacrifices made by him in giving him an education, and then striving to repay the debt of gratitude, by sustaining him

through all the infirmities of his declining years! And how sincerely did he mourn for him, and piously and reverently cherish his memory after he was gone! And when this doom of nature was reversed, and his own children were taken from him, with what affecting tenderness did he pour forth a father's sorrows over their tomb!—As for the old Salisbury neighbors, for miles around, he never forgot them! and after more than half a century he writes about them by name to one of his old school-masters, and tells him whether they are still living at the old place! And as to his new neighbors at Marshfield, on what friendly and familiar terms did he live with them! and when he was about to die, with what good taste and good feeling did he select his pall-bearers from among them, rather than from the ranks of worldly pride and greatness!

In the circle of private friendship, if we may judge from the testimony of those who knew him best, all the finer traits of his character were seen to the best advantage. He gave his hand warmly to his friends and drew them to him with a strong attraction. When surrounded by them, in the freedom of the social hour, he brought forth from the good treasure of his heart, such riches of thought

and feeling, as the great world knew nothing of. Here his brow lost its rigors and its terrors, here was seen the fascination of his smile, here he laid by his senatorial dignity, and assuming a presence which was more winning, and giving free play to his pent-up humor, and drawing upon his great fund of anecdote, indulged in those lighter graces of conversation, which were all the more captivating in him from their contrast with the severer and more elaborate style of his public discourse. But little of this fire-side eloquence of Mr. Webster has yet been published; from this little, however, we should infer, that it is as well worth being fully reported, as the table-talk of Martin Luther or of Dr. Johnson, with both of whom he has sometimes been compared, both in the more rugged, and the more genial aspects of his nature.

But stronger than his love of kindred or friends, was his love of country. He was not indeed indifferent to the welfare of other nations. He spoke potent words for Greece and for Hungary. But these words appear to have been dictated by some apprehension of a possible danger to American institutions from the triumph of absolute principles in Europe, and by some sense of the rightness and fitness on our part, as the leading Republic of the

world, of letting our voice be heard in favor of freedom ; and not at all by any modern notions of the political *fraternity* and *solidarity* of the human species. His words, even in these instances, savor more of American patriotism, than of foreign propagandism. *Spartam nactus es, hanc exorna*, was the ruling principle of his life, and the master-passion of his soul. And since he firmly believed that the safety, honor and welfare of the whole American people could be maintained only by means of the Federal Constitution and the Union of the States, it was upon these that the energies of his patriotism were concentrated. With sleepless vigilance he saw from far whatever threatened them with evil. And in the hour of danger he stood foremost, and often single-handed, in the imminent deadly breach, striking right hand and left, according to the quarter from which the danger came ; rebutting Southern sophistries, and rebuking Northern prejudices, as the case might be ; and at last, when nothing else would do, *devoting himself* for his country, after the sublimest examples of ancient patriotism.

But I cannot bring to a close what ought in justice to be said of Mr. Webster's personal character, without adverting to his religious feelings and

convictions. No man ever had more of what may be called the natural sentiment of religion,—the reverent sense of our dependence on a superior Power. From his earliest youth, and through all his College days, as well as in after years, he never thought or spoke of things sacred and divine without deep seriousness, and never attended upon any religious exercise without becoming devoutness and solemnity: and this too at a period when the spirit of profane mockery was more rife in our Colleges and literary circles, than at any time before or since.

With many persons at the present day, this natural and instinctive reverence of mind, is the beginning and end of religion. But it was not so with Mr. Webster. He was no pantheist or transcendentalist. He believed in the outward, objective reality of those divine things to which this inward sentiment relates. He believed in a personal God, possessed of moral, as well as natural perfection, and exercising a moral and providential government over the world. He believed in the Bible as a Revelation, and in Jesus Christ as a Saviour. He believed in the Church, in the Ministry, in the Ordinances of the Gospel, as positive institutions established by God for his own worship and the redemption of the race.

These religious convictions, received by tradition from his Puritan ancestors, and early incorporated by catechism and sermon, by psalm and hymn, into the very frame-work of his mind, were fortified by his later reflections and studies, and appear to have been never seriously disturbed by infidel doubts or objections. Nor were these convictions coldly speculative;—they were deep and heartfelt. And there is much reason to think, that as he advanced in years, they exerted a more and more controlling influence over his life. As the earthly shadows of Pleasure and of Power by which he had been tempted, began to recede, the Eternal Realities in which he had trusted, drew near and took strong hold upon him. And ever and anon, as he stood on the shore and looked out on the illimitable ocean, or lifted up his eyes to the starry heavens, the visions of immortality broke in upon his soul with overpowering clearness.

As his life drew near its close, the germs of religious character which had been early implanted, and never destroyed, sprang up to high maturity. By that law which so often opposes the spiritual to the natural, as his outer man perished, the inner man was renewed day by day. As the lamp of life was going out, the light of Faith

burned brighter and brighter, and filled with its radiance the house of mourning and of death. It was the faith of the Christian, and not the philosophy of the Sage, which gave him the deep serenity of his last hours, and that great victory over his last enemy. It is not too much to say, that his religious character assumed at last a grandeur proportioned to the scale of his other attributes, and that all which had been before wanting to the highest style of manhood, was supplied in this crown of Christian perfection which was given to him just before his departure.

The great intellectual powers, the great and various learning, the noble qualities of heart, which have now been ascribed to Mr. Webster, had their highest embodiment and expression in his character as an ORATOR. In no other character could all this double wealth of mind and heart have been adequately exhibited. Nor could this noble character have been sustained by him, in its highest dignity, had he been less richly gifted either on the intellectual or emotional side of his nature. But since he had at command these essential qualifications, and could draw at will from exhaustless treasures of thought and learning, and from still more exhaust-

less fountains of feeling and imagination, and possessed besides the physical advantages of voice and person in high perfection, he only needed a great occasion to make him a great orator. Such an occasion never failed to present itself in due season, and whenever it confronted him, it always found him ready to cope with it. However great and appalling the occasion might be, it was always well met in the man, and he greeted it with joy. He not only rose with the occasion, but rose superior to it. In his greatest efforts he seemed to be conscious of possessing a reserved power, beyond the exigencies of the moment. There was something of calm self-possession and high composure in his air, like that of Apollo, when he had sped but a single shaft from his full quiver;—something of proud exultation, in which however there was nothing of arrogance, which seemed to say, ‘that half his strength he put not forth!’

At such times, when standing face to face with some of those great occasions which have been signalized by his triumphs, Mr. Webster was seen in his glory, and reached perhaps the culminating point beyond which our present rational and physical powers cannot go. His temperament, commonly inert and impassive, was then wholly vital-

ized, his very frame was dilated, and his swarthy countenance illuminated, by the inspiring impulse of the emergency. In the high-drawn sketch of one of these occasions given by Mr. March, he is described as having been "gazed at as something more than mortal, and having appeared as Moses might, when emerging from the smoke of Sinai, his face all radiant with the breath of divinity." Another witness of the best authority has affirmed, with somewhat cooler judgment, "that after having heard some of the ablest speeches of the greatest living orators on both sides the water, he had never heard anything which so completely realized his conception of what Demosthenes was when he delivered the Oration for the Crown."

In his character as an orator, he occupied the three great fields of eloquence, the popular, the forensic, and the parliamentary. And if the questions were asked, by whom, in our own age and country, the appropriate excellence of each of these kinds has been in the highest degree illustrated, it could not be better answered, than by pointing for the first, to Mr. Webster's addresses at Plymouth and Bunker Hill; for the second, to his pleas in the case of the Knapps, and of Dartmouth College; for the third, to his replies to Hayne and

Calhoun in the debates in the Senate on Nullification.

In some particular excellences of oratory, it may readily be allowed that he was surpassed by some others;—in overpowering vehemence perhaps by Demosthenes, in ornate and copious diction by Cicero, in the exuberant gush of moral sentiment and enthusiasm by Burke, in sparkling wit and felicitous point by Sheridan, in subtle dialectics by Calhoun, in the graces of elocution and power to move the passions by Henry Clay: but in the harmonious combination of opposite excellences, in the blending of reason and of passion, of argument and illustration, of learning and imagination, of logic and rhetoric, of strength and beauty; in the whole impression thus produced; in that central power of commanding attention and securing conviction and persuasion; he was rarely equalled and perhaps never surpassed.

But while the eloquence of Mr. Webster combined in a remarkable manner these opposite excellences, it was after all, as it seems to me, most distinguished for its intellectual element. His eloquence more than that of any other orator, was the eloquence of thought and of reason. And of this distinguishing trait, the best example, if I do

not mistake, is his reply to Mr. Calhoun, already referred to. Unlike his reply to Mr. Hayne, it depended wholly for its effect upon clearness of thought and power of argument. It exhibited, as has been well said, the dignity of human reason in its loftiest expression. In the course of a long debate, in which almost every senator had taken part, no real progress had been made, no solid ground had been gained. The whole subject had come to appear like that Serbonian bog described by Mr. Webster, in which one after another, on which side soever he might approach, went down, and sank deeper and deeper, the more he endeavored to extricate himself. When Mr. Webster arose, after a brief exordium, he laid down, in simple and concise terms, four propositions, in opposition to the three which had been advanced by Mr. Calhoun. Henceforward there was something to stand upon. The entrance of his word had given light. As he proceeded, the mists cleared away, the darkness fled, the chaos became organized. And when he had finished, the whole subject was emphatically *elucidated*, and the whole controversy finally settled.

It has been said of Lord Chatham, that he was not the master, but the slave of his own speech,

and that he was carried along by it, he knew not whither. The contrary of this was always true of Mr. Webster; but never more true than in this reply to Mr. Calhoun. That high mastery over the subject, that fund of reserved power, with which he always impressed his hearers, was strikingly exhibited during the delivery of this speech, by a little incident which I happened to witness, from standing in the crowd near the orator. At a moment when the argument seemed to demand his undivided attention, and when the powers of the assembly were most severely taxed in following him, and all were hanging on his lips, a package of letters was laid on his desk by a page of the Senate. Without at all arresting the course of his argumentation, except perhaps by a slight abatement of the fluency of his utterance, he opened his letters, and cast his eye over them, so as apparently to possess himself of their chief contents, by a perfectly contemporaneous process of thought; and thus gave demonstration that, great as were the occasion and the subject, he had mind enough for them, *and to spare*.

The immediate effect of Mr. Webster's oratory will never be forgotten by any by whom it has ever been experienced or witnessed. Even when

most purely argumentative it held the hearer spell-bound. When it rose to a higher and more impassioned strain, it swept over the audience like a rushing wind. And at the close of his great efforts, it was not at all unusual for him to leave his hearers in that state of supernatural stillness and breathless enchantment, which was once produced by Mr. Sheridan, and once by Lord Brougham, and here and there, in the course of centuries, by some other great orator, and which, whenever it occurs, is always regarded as the highest triumph of eloquence.

From contemplating Mr. Webster as an orator we are naturally led to survey the vast field of his *public services*, as it was more in this character than in any other, that he accomplished whatever was done by him for the good of his country.

And first of all, it was no small advantage to the country to be represented, at home and abroad, by an organ so admirably endowed and accomplished. Born as he was under the American flag, springing from the very heart of American life, formed intellectually and morally by American influences, and embodying American ideas, he showed to the world what these were capable of producing. By his own greatness he reflected honor on the system

which he represented, and rendered illustrious the age and country which had given him birth. He redeemed his native soil from the reproach of having been smitten with intellectual sterility, in being dissevered from the seats of European civilization, and furnished to every countryman of his who went abroad, a passport to favor which he was always proud to present, and which was never challenged.

But this was not all. While he honored the American character by his manner of conceiving and representing it on the stage of the world, he at the same time did much for its improvement and elevation. It is a remark of general truth, that the education of a people proceeds from its great men. And this remark was never more true than in this instance. The American people owe to the lessons of Daniel Webster the best part of the instruction they have received in the principles of their Constitution, and their rights and duties under it. They owe to his love of the Union and his sense of its value, inculcated upon them so fervently and so incessantly, whether they would hear or forbear, very much of the strength of that feeling of *nationality*, which holds together so firmly those who are repelled from each other by so many

discordant interests. In several well-known instances the whole previous sentiment of the country on great national questions, has been revolutionized by him at a single blow. And the habitual mode of thinking and feeling of the great mass of the people on all matters involving the general welfare,—the great public opinion of the country,—has been in past times formed and fashioned, and is at present controlled and guided, by his influence, in a far greater degree than by any other agency.

Mr. Webster was not a *writer*, in the strict sense of this term. He never addressed the public immediately as an *author*. He never wrote a *book* in his life. But probably no author ever held for so long a time so intimate a relation with the public, or exercised so transforming a power over it. His speeches, as they fell from his lips, were caught up by the press, and transferred to the page, and became the popular literature of the hour, and were read in every counting-room, in every work-shop, in every dwelling-house, throughout the land, and were then formed into a permanent library of political wisdom and patriotic sentiment. And we have only to consider what these speeches were, which have furnished for so many years a principal part of the reading and study of the people ;—how

pure in style, how profound in thought, how various in their topics, how frank and honest, manly and independent, noble and elevated in their tone, how free from the corrupting flatteries and misleading sophistries of the demagogue, how full of the love of liberty and progress on the one hand, and on the other, how fraught with veneration for law, and imbued with the spirit of a wise conservatism;—we have only to consider this, in order to form some estimate of the good influence which he has exerted, and to see how ill we could afford to lose that part of our national education which we have received from him.

But it is impossible to give any just account of the good which has been done by Mr. Webster, without descending somewhat more into particulars. Let it be considered, then, that there is not one of the great fundamental interests of society, which has not received from him, at some time or other, some specific, signal, and vital service, by which it has been laid under greater obligations to him than to any other man.

Where is the man to whom the cause of learning owes so much as to Daniel Webster! By his celebrated argument before the Supreme Court in the case of Dartmouth College, the law was settled

which secures to Learning the independence of her institutions, and the free enjoyment of their chartered privileges. It was owing to this argument, and to the remarkable ability and pathetic earnestness with which it was enforced, beyond all question, that the law was so settled. Henceforward our Colleges and Universities, holding their property by the same firm legal tenure as individuals, may justly look to him almost as a second founder. "The battle fought, and the victory won, in that particular case," says Mr. Everett, "were fought and gained for every College and University, for every Academy and School in the United States, endowed with property, or possessed of chartered rights."

Of the same paramount nature is the service rendered by Mr. Webster to the cause of religion, in his argument on the validity of Girard's will, and in his constant, emphatic public testimony to the importance of Christianity, in accordance with the opinions there expressed. It is something to say of a public man, in an age like this, as has been said of him, that no word of profaneness or irreverence ever fell from his lips. But it is not enough to say for Mr. Webster. Always and everywhere, alike in public and in private, he uttered himself

in a full, direct, open and bold vindication of the truth of the Christian religion, and its importance to the success of our free institutions, representing it as the grand condition on which depends the realization of the hopes of the American patriot. All that he has said on this subject, if collected together, would make a large volume. And I can think of no one thing which, at the present moment, is exerting an influence so favorable to religion on the great public mind of this country, as this earnest testimony of Mr. Webster in its behalf, repeated as it has been in every possible form, and now rehearsed from every pulpit, and spread broadcast in the newspapers over the whole length and breadth of the land. Not many wise, not many mighty are called. But when one of the very wisest and the very mightiest is called, and profoundly feels and openly acknowledges the transcendent claims of religion, it is an argument not easily disposed of by a scoffing and conceited infidelity. When such a man as Daniel Webster lays his hand on the Bible, and says, *This is the Book*, it is worth more than whole volumes of Evidences.

Another of our great vital interests is that of law. And there is no lawyer who will not join with Mr. Clifford of Massachusetts, in saying, that

it is scarcely possible to measure the magnitude of the debt which the law owes to Mr. Webster. To say nothing of the fact that he stood foremost in the ordinary practice of the law, and illustrated by his genius all its ordinary branches, he entered on a field of Jurisprudence such as has existed nowhere else, in any age of the world; and was the founder of a school or system of law, determining the new and delicate relations of the Federal Government to particular States and to individuals; and has thus provided for the peaceable settlement, by regular judicial process, of those countless questions of conflicting claims and jurisdictions, which must otherwise have awaited, here as elsewhere in the world, the dreadful arbitrament of the sword.

But eminent as were the services rendered by Mr. Webster to the great interests of learning, religion and law, they are not still the services upon which his claims to the gratitude of his countrymen principally repose. The services already enumerated were for the most part performed by him in his earlier and professional career, and though brilliant enough to eclipse any ordinary fame, are themselves completely thrown into the shade by the services rendered by him in his later and higher career as a diplomatist and statesman.

On his accession to the office of Secretary of State in 1841, he found the country on the verge of war with the most powerful nation of the world. The old questions of fifty years standing respecting the North-eastern boundary seemed fast ripening to bloody issues, and at the same time new sources of irritation were occurring on the high seas and along the Canadian frontier. These difficulties, old and new, were brought to a satisfactory settlement in the Treaty of Washington. And the credit of this great treaty, by which the honor and interest of the country were asserted, and at the same time the peace of the world maintained, is due mainly to the negotiator on the American side. It was doubtless owing to the confidence inspired by his character, that Great Britain was disposed, after so many failures, to enter upon a new negotiation. And the delicate trust of conducting it was committed by the English Government to one known as a personal friend of Mr. Webster, and was undertaken by him solely and professedly on the ground of his "reliance upon the honorable and upright character of the American Secretary." How amply this confidence was justified by Mr. Webster; how nobly he rose above the low cunning and chicanery of a hacknied diplomacy; with

what high statesmanship he provided against possible contingencies, and through difficulties which had baffled all previous attempts at settlement, secured a result advantageous to all the parties concerned; all this is sufficiently known to the country and to the world. It is well remarked by the editor of Mr. Webster's diplomatic papers, that the just measure of praise due to the American negotiator may be estimated by reflecting, what would have been our condition, if instead of a war with Mexico, we had been involved in a war with Great Britain.

But besides these services of Mr. Webster in adjusting our foreign relations, and far superior to them in dignity and importance, are his services in defending the Government at home. During the eventful period of his public life, several successive crises have arisen in which the Constitution and the Union have been seriously threatened from different and opposite quarters.—The prevalence at the South, some twenty years ago, of a violent hostility to the Protective Policy dictated by Northern interests, gave birth to the extreme doctrines of State rights and Nullification. With Hayne and Calhoun for their champions, it seemed for a moment as if they were about to overrun the country

and override the Government. They advanced under color of a specious theory, by which the Constitution is represented as a compact between sovereign States, liable to be dissolved at their option. By this theory the good work accomplished by the framers of the Constitution was wholly undone, and the flood-gates were opened for all the evils of the old Confederacy, in a ten-fold aggravated form. Had this theory been established, it is difficult even for the imagination to depict the miseries which must inevitably have ensued. That it was not established, and all its train of fatal consequences with it, is owing, under God, to the stand then taken by Mr. Webster. No other man was equal to the emergency. But no sooner did it arise, than he was ready for it, armed and equipped at all points, as if his whole life had been spent in preparing for it. In two successive encounters, in fair and open field, with the odds against him, he met the two great champions of Nullification, and gave them and their doctrine a hopeless overthrow. In looking back to the ever memorable contests of that period, we are apt, in our admiration of the prowess of the field, to forget the momentous interests at stake. We are apt to think more of that eloquence which shook the Capitol, and entranced

the nation, than of that profound research which laid bare, for the first time, the deep foundations of our Government in the will of the whole people. But after all, Mr. Webster is likely to be remembered and estimated by his grateful countrymen in after times, far less as an orator, than as the Expounder and Defender of the Constitution, and the chosen instrument, in the hand of Providence, in effecting the deliverance of the country from the evils with which it was threatened.

At a later period, and nearer to our own times, the prevalence at the North of hostility to Southern institutions, gave birth to projects by which the Union and the Constitution were again endangered;—the Union, by fostering a spirit of desperate sectional animosity;—the Constitution, by trampling on the guarantees established by it for the protection of the rights of the slave-holding States. Through the excitement consequent upon these projects, the public business was brought to a stand, and the public mind dismayed with the apprehension of coming evils. In this crisis the veteran Senator from Massachusetts was seen again at his post, looking somewhat older, but showing no abatement either in the power of his mind, or the fire of his patriotism. He stood where he always

had stood, and where he had promised he should always be found, for the Constitution and the Union. The assailants came from the opposite point of the compass, and so he had faced about; but he had not changed sides. It was no longer the gay and prancing chivalry of the South which he had to encounter; but a sturdy and multitudinous Northern constituency, and foremost among them his old friends from Massachusetts, with whom and for whom he had stood so long, now advancing under new leaders, and impelled to constantly new encroachments by the aggressive force of moral and religious convictions. The impending contest imposed upon him the severest trial of his life. It required his parting with old friends, for whom he cherished profound esteem, and whose animating convictions on the great question at issue were deeply shared by him, in everything but in their threatening aspect to the Union and the Constitution. But so long as he believed these to be in danger, it concerned him little who were friends or foes. In the similar crisis just referred to, he had united in the defence of the Constitution with an administration, to the general policy of which he was strongly opposed, and against which he had always acted; and he was prepared now, in a case

equally involving the stability of the Government, to separate from those, whose general policy he approved and had always supported. He foresaw the storm he was raising; but it did not move him from his purpose. He was willing now, as before, to take his chance among those upon whom blows might fall first and fall thickest. And accordingly on the 7th of March his voice was again heard, in tones as earnest as ever came from his lips, speaking not as a Massachusetts man, nor as a Northern man, but as an American, and as a member of the Senate of the United States. "He felt," he said, "that he had a duty to perform, a part to act, not for his own security, for he was looking out for no fragment upon which to float away from the wreck, if wreck there must be; but for the good of the whole, for the preservation of the Union." It has turned out here, as before, that the post of danger, assumed voluntarily in the spirit of self-sacrifice, became the post of honor. By a singular felicity of fortune, Mr. Webster became, the second time, the principal instrument of a deliverance as signal as any which has occurred in the history of the nation. By common consent he is entitled to the principal credit of this great settlement, in which the North and the South have once more embraced each other

with fraternal affection, and under which the country has resumed its wonted career of peace and prosperity.

With the departure of this great Statesman, the second great epoch of American history is brought to a close. In the first period, the Constitution was established by the wisdom of the fathers of the Republic. It devolved on the second period to guard the new institute amid the shocks and convulsions of the political world attendant on its establishment, to develop its latent principles, to define and limit its powers, to adjust the relations of its several parts, to supply unforeseen deficiencies and provide for future contingencies, to cause it to be obeyed and loved at home, and known and respected abroad, and above all to deliver it down unimpaired to after times. And this was precisely the work for which Mr. Webster appears to have been raised up by Providence, and for which he was exactly fitted. It has been laid to his charge, that he himself founded no great organizations to bind him to the future. He found already established all the great organizations of society; and he saw no occasion either to add others to them, or

to set them aside, to make place for those of his own contrivance. From the whole class of political schemers and radical reformers, he was separated by the force of a temperament fundamentally conservative. He received the institutions delivered down by our fathers as a sacred trust, to be improved perhaps where they might be imperfect, or to be modified with a wise and reverent caution, as new circumstances might arise, but at all hazards to be maintained, in their substance and spirit, for the good of our own and coming generations. This office, *civitatem jam conditam conservare*, was the only one to which he felt himself to be called. If it was an office second in dignity to that of the founders, it was still an office arduous enough to task all his powers, and glorious enough to fill his highest ambition. To this office, according to the elevated conception which he had formed of its duties, he devoted himself, in the fear of God, through a long life, up to the last hour of it. And nobly was it discharged! That which was committed to him, in trust for posterity, he had kept. When his eyes were turned for the last time to behold the sun in the heavens, he saw, as he had prayed he might, "the gorgeous ensign of the Re-

public still full high advanced, not a stripe erased, not a star obscured." His mission of preserving, through this long and doubtful period of experiment, a Constitution of Government affecting the present happiness of millions, and the future destinies of the whole human family, was now ended.— *Well done, good and faithful servant*, is the verdict of his country, and we cannot doubt of that higher tribunal before which he has gone to appear.

In that third period which is now dawning upon us with doubtful portents, our safety lies in maintaining the Constitution, as established by its framers in the first period, and as delivered down to us, through the second, with the expositions of its great defender. Happy will it be for us, if on the withdrawal of his wise and conservative care, the great wheel of political movement, (to use one of his own figures,) hitherto so guarded and regular in its rotation, shall not be at once unduly accelerated, and take fire, like the chariot-wheels in the races of antiquity, with the rapidity of its own motion! Happy will it be for us, if the great principles inculcated by Mr. Webster during his whole life, shall be remembered by us now that he has gone; and the counsels and admonitions which he

has so recently addressed to us, shall be faithfully heeded !

It will be in vain that we shall seek to immortalize his features and his form in marble and in bronze, if we forget his doctrines and his precepts. It will be in vain that we shall erect his monument, and garnish his sepulchre, if we disclaim his maxims and decline from his principles. Fruitless to him are all these tardy honors decreed to him by a Republic, now indeed grateful and repentant, but too late. The highest splendors of earthly station, eclipsed in his view by a glory which excels them all, can no longer provoke a sigh or a regret. But if earth's unsubstantial splendors have ceased to attract his regard, not so the great cause of human progress and happiness, not so the great institutions of Law and Religion, by which alone that progress and happiness can be secured. Seated on that mythic cloud, by which he has already been snatched from the earth, and borne aloft to the sphere of the immortals, methinks he may still be seen watching, with guardian care, over these great institutions to which his life was devoted, still frowning as aforetime, with the blackness of midnight, upon every project threatening them with

evil, still smiling as aforetime, with the beauty of morning, upon every design promising them advantage, and aiding every honest effort in their behalf with his prayer and benediction.

EULOGY

ON

DANIEL WEBSTER.

BY LEONARD WOODS, JR., D. D.





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